

Situations vacant

Whether you've got itchy feet and are looking for a new job to get stuck into, or are on the scout for new staff, spreading the word online is an increasingly popular option. Ursula Tolaini presents the pros and cons of online recruitment

What do you have to do to find a new job in these recession-tinged times? Trawl the relevant newspapers and trade publications, register with an agency or send off some CVs on spec? All these time-consuming tasks can now be done centrally online as web-based recruitment comes into its own. In the future more and more workers will turn to the web when they are thinking of moving on. Research carried out on behalf of online recruitment site Reed.co.uk suggests that as many as one in three skilled jobseekers will use the internet first when they are looking for their next job.

Over the next few pages we look at the benefits of both advertising and seeking jobs online, and we review some of the many sites and services on offer, evaluating them for ease of use, reliability and usefulness. We also explore why employers should take the web seriously as a recruitment resource.

Looking for a job

There are over 400 recruitment websites on the internet and the quality and quantity of jobs they offer varies widely. We've taken a look at a small selection to see what such sites have to offer job seekers.

- www.jobs.guardian.co.uk Guardian Unlimited is part of *The Guardian* newspaper's site and lists jobs in 14 different sectors, including jobs from the paper's three specialised areas: media, society and education. You can do a quick search by simply typing in the particular kind of job you are looking for. More accurate results can be gleaned if you specify the sector you are interested in. Here you can fill out a form with more details about what you are looking for, narrowing your search to specific jobs in a certain location.

Registered users benefit from useful tools such as the option of saving searches and job ads, or setting up a daily email service to alert you to new jobs. The site can store your CV and multiple profiles (ideal if you're unsure exactly which job to apply for) ready to send out to employers, and keep a record of any applications you have made.

Guardian Unlimited is easy to use but doesn't offer the range of advice you can find on other sites. Its strengths lie in the traditional core areas covered by *The Guardian* newspaper, which is no surprise

as online ads are offered free to all advertisers in the paper. For example, searching for a teaching job in London turned up 15 positions, while there was just one vacancy for a systems analyst.

- www.workthing.com Another site in the Guardian Media Group stable, this focuses on financial/legal appointments, although there are 17 job areas to click through to. Again, you can do a quick search or add more detail for a closer match.

We liked the way even a quick search threw up plenty of relevant jobs, but also automatically launched the option to refine your search on the lefthand side of the screen. Guidance on the categories to choose in order to tailor your search helps ensure the ads you see are right for you. Registered users can also take advantage of extras such as daily job emails.

Workthing.com has plenty of employment advice. There are links to sites offering training and a tie-in with a site where freelancers can bid for projects, although these seemed mainly US-based.

- www.peoplebank.com Workthing.com has recently extended its service with the

→ Based on ads from *The Guardian* newspaper, Guardian Unlimited specialises in media, society and education opportunities

↓ The financial and legal sectors are the focus of Workthing.com, although there are other employment categories



purchase of one of the UK's oldest online recruitment sites, PeopleBank.com. A brief look at the key employers posting to this site, such as Tesco and Sainsbury's, betrays its strength in retail appointments, but there are plenty of other categories to

choose from. Searches found some pretty random matches – looking for a job in sales and marketing as a manager threw up three jobs as a food advisor.

PeopleBank offers registered users all the usual services, such as job alerts and the ability to create an online CV. There is also an advice centre with tips on interviews, plus legal information and



↑ PeopleBank.com concentrates on the retail industry, but our search attempts were pretty random

a FAQs section, however we didn't find navigating this site particularly intuitive.

• www.fish4jobs.co.uk Fish4jobs.co.uk is another site backed by newspaper groups – this time a consortium of regional publishers – and the jobs listed are culled from their classified ads. This means you get jobs covering a broad area – although, as usual, jobs in the south east of the UK appeared to be more plentiful. It has seven core career areas, each of which has its own home page with information on getting started, trade journals, training and so on. But you can also use the site to look for jobs in other industries.

The quick search option is easy – just type in the job you want and your area of interest. Despite this simplicity, the results are surprisingly accurate. Although London job listings cover a wide catchment area, if you are more picky you can search by postcode instead. A registered users' area offers all the usual services.

The Career Centre has advice on everything a jobseeker could need, from creating a CV to psychometric tests and legal advice. It also runs recruiter profiles that tell you more about featured employers and agencies, plus general employment-related news and articles.

• www.monster.co.uk Monster.co.uk is one of the few sites to advertise global appointments as well as jobs in the UK. However, before you get too excited, these jobs are collated from affiliate agencies across the world, so they are aimed more at nationals of those countries than Brits looking to work abroad. We doubt that our application for a job as a model booker in San Francisco will lead to a green card and emigration across the pond, but you

never know. UK searches threw up plenty of job vacancies, but the vast majority are from agencies, so this is not the best site to visit if you want to apply to companies directly.

Alongside all the standard features you'll find on any recruitment site, there is an attempt to create a feeling of community – you can link into areas specialising in certain industries where there is a wealth of advice and forums where you can post questions for an expert to answer, as well

as getting advice from other users.

• www.reed.co.uk Backed by the Reed recruitment agency network, it's free for any employer or agency to post a job on this site. Reed.co.uk has one of the largest selections of jobs – currently the total stands at around 85,000. Unlike

many of its rivals you have to register on Reed.co.uk before you can use it. This gives you automatic access to all the extra features, such as an online CV and the AnyJob service, which allows you to email applications to any employer you wish, whether or not you found them on the site.

Like most sites, Reed.co.uk can email you jobs daily, but it will also send alerts to your mobile via a text message, so you can find out about vacancies wherever you are. Its jobs are also posted on www.i-resign.com, which offers much of the advice found on other sites.

Of course, this is a tiny snapshot of the sites that are out there if you are looking for a new job. There are plenty of other sites you might like to try including: www.jobserve.com; www.jobsite.co.uk; www.planetrecruit.co.uk; www.gis-a-job.com; www.tesjobs.co.uk (for teaching); www.milkround.co.uk (for graduates); www.netjobs.co.uk and www.jobsearch.co.uk.

Posting your CV online

Posting your employment credentials on a website is one way to advertise your skills and experience. Indeed, when you are applying for a hi-tech job, it has almost become the norm to provide employers with a URL pointing to your personal website. However, while in theory this method gets your details in front of the wide audience offered by the internet, in practice no one will find your online CV unless they are pointed there by you, or come across the site by accident.

And, while freelancers looking for work on spec would be advised to advertise their availability, those in full-time work might not be so keen to show the world they are ready to move on. But there are plenty of ways to store your CV on the internet, without going to the trouble of creating your own website.

Most recruitment sites allow you to hold an online CV with them, ready to email out to potential employers. Many also offer sample CVs for you to crib from and advice on how to make your CV look its best. Reed.co.uk's AnyJob service allows you to email out your CV and covering letter to the employer you are interested in – an ideal solution if you don't want to send out applications from your work email account.

There's also a host of websites that are specifically designed to hold your online CV. Getmyonlinecv.com, for example, provides a personalised URL to send out to employers that points to your CV, as well as advice and a step-by-step guide to building up your CV. Another service, which is at

www.ukcv.net, specialises in students and graduates.

Finally, remember to think about the quality of the site you choose to host your CV – a blue chip company is unlikely to be impressed by colourful graphics and cheap web design.



↑ Getmyonlinecv.com gives step-by-step advice on compiling a CV and stores it online for you

Jobs abroad

Since the internet is a global resource, it ought to be a good place to look if you fancy moving on to pastures new and are seeking a job in another country. However, while we found plenty of advice and information about working abroad, actual job opportunities seemed few and far between.

Monster.co.uk lists jobs abroad, but these aren't really aimed at those looking to work elsewhere, though they might be useful to get an idea of the sort of vacancies available in the countries you are interested in. One site, Payaway.co.uk, claims it will send a monthly list of jobs abroad in return for your email address, but so far we have received nothing (looks like we're stuck in rainy London for a bit longer then).

However, this site is well worth a look as it offers plenty of advice and information about working abroad, plus firsthand accounts from those who have actually taken the plunge. Their experience covers a range of careers from teaching English abroad to working as a ski reps or au pair.

→ Payaway.co.uk gives advice on working abroad, gap year jobs and working holidays. However, we are still waiting for the promised list of jobs abroad



If you are after gap year work, or want to volunteer abroad, there are sites devoted to speeding you on your way – Workingabroad.com lists hundreds of volunteer opportunities, while the equally imaginatively titled Gapyear.com has loads of ideas of how to while away your time before starting college. Bunac's website also lists opportunities to work abroad for students and young people at www.bunac.org.

The benefits for employers

For candidates the advantages of looking for a job online are obvious. It represents the simplest way to carry out fast, targeted and free searches for vacancies in your industry. There is no need to sign up with an agency, or to buy a paper or magazine and read through all the jobs, you can just search for jobs that match your ideal criteria and, usually, apply at the click of a button by emailing your online CV and covering letter.

Indeed, so popular is this method of job seeking that among the respondents to Reed.co.uk's survey *The Quiet Revolution: Technology Transforming Recruitment*, those citing the internet as the best source of jobs has risen by 77 percent since 2000. The rise has been sharpest among skilled AB

candidates – up from 18 percent last year to 37 percent this year. Statistics from Jobserve.com, an online-only recruitment service specialising in IT appointments, back this up, with searches up by almost 400,000 from this time last year to almost 1.5 million a week.

This level of interest alone should encourage employers to look to the internet when seeking new staff, but there are other benefits, too. Everyone we spoke to cited three main reasons why employers were looking to the web when they needed to hire new staff: ease, speed and cost. As Jobserve.com's

managing director, Robbie Cowling, puts it: "Employers want to be able to [recruit] quicker, better and faster."

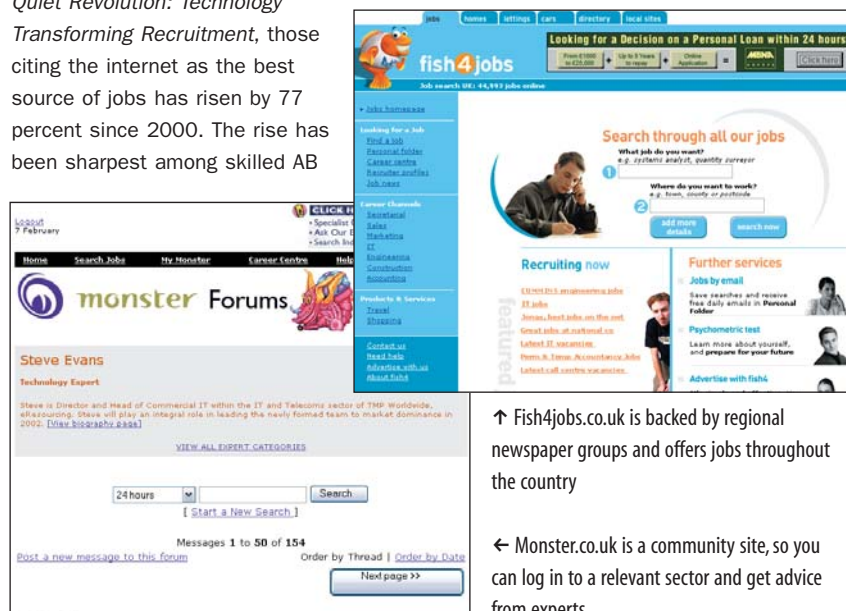
Quick, cheap and easy

Advertising a job vacancy online is a simple matter and many recruitment sites let you update details just as easily. Advertisers on Reed.co.uk can access their job details at any time to tweak them in order to improve response.

Equally, the web offers many ways to tailor who responds to your ad in order to get the best candidates. Alex Foster, recruitment sales manager at Guardian Unlimited, explains that one of its advertisers asked it to develop a filter to prevent unsuitable candidates from applying. Anyone interested in the job had to answer four questions; based on their answers they were either told to continue with their application or not to take it any further.

Foster also says that the internet offers many ways to promote your firm's vacancies and brand, such as the addition of banners and links to information sites about your business. Reed.co.uk's director of marketing and communications, Katy Nicholson, backs this up: "You can have special banners or an online brochure about your organisation. The web allows you to produce exciting interactive material."

Speed is another factor that makes the web an attractive medium. While it can be



↑ Fish4jobs.co.uk is backed by regional newspaper groups and offers jobs throughout the country

← Monster.co.uk is a community site, so you can log in to a relevant sector and get advice from experts

Top 10 online recruitment tips

For employees

1. **Look for sites that concentrate on your industry and register with as many as possible so you hear about all the jobs on offer.**
2. **Check how many jobs the site carries and how often they are updated. A site that carries thousands of jobs may look good, but if the listings are months old how many are still vacant?**
3. **Keep your CV up to date and make sure your current details are stored. Use the advice available online to make sure your CV ideally suits the job you are after.**
4. **Set up a personal email account so you can send and receive information regarding your applications without upsetting your current employer.**
5. **Check the websites of any companies you are interested in working for as vacancies will often be posted there first.**

For employers

6. **Research sites before you advertise to make sure they cater for your industry.**
7. **Compare the charges of several sites to see what you get for your money. Choosing the cheapest service can sometimes be shortsighted.**
8. **Make sure your ad listing is self-explanatory so it will be picked up when candidates carry out a search. Esoteric job titles and descriptions will often fail to be picked up.**
9. **Investigate extra opportunities offered by the web, such as banners, online brochures and filtering tools.**
10. **Set up a process to handle emailed job applications. If you go to the trouble of putting a job online, it makes sense to allow people to apply online, too.**

weeks between submitting an ad and it appearing in print, the same vacancy can be online within seconds. Nicholson explains: "The internet is very fast and flexible. You don't have to wait for publication deadlines before you start recruiting."

The time it takes to place an ad in a publication is not the only drawback. Cowling believes it's easier to overlook a job in a magazine or newspaper. "You have to read the whole magazine to find a job." Online you can search for jobs that match specific criteria and are thus more likely to be matched with the right job.

Finally, cost is the bottom line for many companies and advertising jobs online is infinitely cheaper than getting them in print. The price of placing a job ad in a national newspaper can run into thousands of pounds, whereas you can post a vacancy on Reed.co.uk for nothing. Few sites make no charge, but even an established online player like Jobserve.com only charges a

maximum of £80 for an advertisement. Place lots of jobs on the website and this price can fall as low as £4. That price doesn't just cover the ad; it also gets your vacancy emailed out to likely candidates.

Of course, the industry sector you are in will affect how well the web works for you. For example, IT jobs have found a natural home on the internet, as employees in this sector are technology-savvy and accustomed to using the web. Other sectors have been slower to catch on. It is therefore equally important for employers to do their research as it is for candidates. Also make sure any site you use is suitable for the vacancies you want to advertise.

Let us not overlook a further option, which is to advertise job vacancies on your company's website. Not everyone who browses your site will be looking for work, but by the very act of visiting it they are showing an interest in what you do.

The future

Whichever way you look at it the internet is having an impact on both how we look for jobs and for staff. Nicholson sums it up: "The internet has the power to make the job market better. You need to put the right job and the right individual together and [the internet] has the power to do that." While it may not be the answer for every industry, the internet is transforming the job market and the ease with which we can both seek a new position or find a new employee means this method of recruitment looks set to expand over the coming years. ■

Useful books for further information

Job hunting online

- ***Online Job Hunting* by Martin Yate and Terra Dourlan; publisher Kogan Page; £8.99.**
- ***The Complete Idiot's Guide to Finding Your Dream Job Online* by Julia Cardis; publisher Alpha Books QUE; £17.50.**
- ***The Everything Online Job Search Book* by Steven Graber and Barry Littmann; publisher Adams Media Corporation; £12.95.**
- ***Job Hunting on the Internet* by Richard Nelso Bolles; publisher Ten Speed Press; £8.99.**

Writing a CV

- ***Writing a CV that works* by Paul McGee; publisher How To Books; £7.99.**
- ***Writing a CV* by JA Bliss and MA Bliss; publisher Link Writing Services; £4.95.**

Working abroad

Vacationwork.co.uk lists titles about working abroad and offers job listings.

- ***Guide to Working Abroad* by Godfrey Golzen and Helen Kogan; publisher Kogan Page; £12.99.**
- ***Work Your Way Around the World* by Susan Griffith; publisher Vacation Work Publications; £12.95.**



See page 237 for special reader offers on Kogan Page's job hunting and recruitment books